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FRENCH'S ACTING EDITION

THE DUCHESS OF DOHERTY COURT

1916 (ALFRED HOLLES).

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COURT

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THE DUCHESS OF DOHERTY COURT

A COMEDY

By
ALFRED HOLLES

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THE DUCHESS OF DOHERTY COURT

Performed on Friday, December 16, 1910, at the
Court Theatre, London.

ALFRED JONES, an ostler .	. Mr. Nye Charl
FLORENCE PLANTAGENET	
TUDOR, otherwise Mrs.	
Jones	Lady Clarke Fervoise

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THE DUCHESS OF DOHERTY COURT

SCENE.—*A kitchen. Homely furniture. Cloth laid for tea. Florence discovered laying tea.*

FLORENCE. I ain't a-going to call myself Flo Jones no longer. "Florence Plantagenet Tudor" is my reel name, an' I'm a-goin' to stick to it. I ain't a-going to call myself *Mrs. Jones* neither (*busying herself about room*). Florence Plantagenet Tudor is quite good enough for me, and as soon as Alf comes back from the lawyers, that's the name I'm a'goin' to be known by, an' Alf can change 'is if 'e likes.

ALFRED (*speaking off*). Good-bye, old sport, and I thank ye for the tip.

FLORENCE. That's 'im, that's Alf; now we shall 'ear the news.

Enter ALF, an ostler, smoking a cigar, and carrying a flower pot and several small paper bags.

ALFRED (*cheerfully*). Hello, old gal! Give us a kiss!

FLORENCE (*looking at bags and pushing him off*). Wot's them things you've got?

ALFRED. Hot'ouse grapes, two bob a pound. (*Gives her a bag.*)

FLORENCE (*throwing bag on table contemptuously*). Never mind them. Wot about the lawyer?

ALFRED (*blandly*). Wot lawyer?

FLORENCE. Wot lawyer? Wot did I send yer to town for?

ALFRED. I don't know.

FLORENCE. Didn't I send you to see the lawyer about my property?

ALFRED (*remembering*). Why, of course, you did, but never mind about 'im, look at this. (*Showing flower in pot.*) Ain't it got a lovely smell? We've 'ad a bit of luck, old gal!

FLORENCE (*excitedly*). 'As it come off, then?

ALFRED. Course it has. He simply romped 'ome.

FLORENCE. Who romped 'ome? Not the lawyer?

ALFRED (*confused*). Wot lawyer?

FLORENCE (*plaintively*). There now, you promised to see a lawyer about my property, and you've forgotten all about it.

ALFRED. O' course. No, I ain't. O' course I saw the lawyer. Why, that was wot I went out for, wasn't it?

FLORENCE (*breathlessly*). Go on, Alf.

ALFRED. And a very nice fellow 'e is too, gave me this cigar.

FLORENCE. You are keepin' something back!

ALFRED. No, I ain't. I 'aven't anything to hide.

FLORENCE. Alf Jones. I'll never arsk you a favour again; you know 'ow my 'eart is fair bursting to know whether I'm somebody or nobody, and you goes an' forgits all about it. (*Breaking down.*) It's too bad, it is. (*Sits and wipes eyes with her apron.*)

ALFRED. 'Arf a minute. Don't take on like that, just when I've 'ad a bit o' luck.

FLORENCE (*smiling eagerly*). Then you 'ave got good news, Alf?

ALFRED. Er course I have. I saw the lawyer—certainly I did.

FLORENCE (*excitedly*). Tell me, Alf, am I somebody or nobody?

ALFRED (*after hesitation, weakly*). You are everybody, my girl, you are.

FLORENCE (*seizing him by neck*). Oh, Alf! Tell me, am I a Duke's daughter or a' Earl's?

ALFRED. Well—you are—a kind of mixture, sort of 'arf an' 'arf breed.

FLORENCE. Half and half. D'ye mean I'm a mongrel? (*Firing up.*)

ALFRED (*expostulating*). No, no. You are a kind of a cross.

FLORENCE (*angrily*). I don't believe you've been to the lawyer's at all.

ALFRED. Oh, yes; I 'ave.

FLORENCE (*volubly*). 'An did you show 'im the advertisement I cut out of *Llōyd's*?

ALFRED. Course I did. 'Ere it is: "Wanted to know the whereabouts of the lineal descendants of the houses of Plantagenet and Tudor."

FLORENCE (*volubly*). Did you tell 'im both those names is mine, an' they is the same as my own father's?

ALFRED. I did.

FLORENCE (*conceitedly*). Wot did he say to that?

ALFRED. He scratched 'is 'ead.

FLORENCE. Scratched 'is 'ead. Didn't he look surprised?

ALFRED. I should think 'e just did look surprised. There's no doubt about it, your father was a dook.

FLORENCE (*joyfully*). Then I *am* a lady after all?

ALFRED. Course you is.

FLORENCE (*suddenly awed*). I say, Alf, shall I 'ave to wear one of them things on my 'ead like the ladies wore at the King's Corporation?

ALFRED (*laughing secretly*). Course you will.

FLORENCE. Wot do you call 'em—a Ta-ra-ra.

ALFRED. Yus.

FLORENCE. A thing all over diamonds, 'an gold an' spangles?

ALFRED (*grinning*). I've bought yer the very thing. (*Produces a very faded tinsel crown from paper bag.*) What do you think of that, old gal, eh?

FLORENCE. Do I wear it on my 'ead in the street?

ALFRED. Course you will.

FLORENCE. Won't people think I'm selling 'em?

ALFRED. You'll only wear that on special occasions, like when you go to tea with the toffs. I suppose you wouldn't mind that, old gal?

FLORENCE. Now tell me all about my ancestors.

ALFRED. Wot shall I say now? Well, you see, *your* father's father's, great-great-grandfather, was a soldier.

FLORENCE. A soldier?

ALFRED. Not one of them fellows you see in the Park, with a gal an' a cane; but the real thing, like one of them you see in the tower, covered all over with sheets of rusty pig iron, with rivets in it, an' a dish cover on their heads. You 'ad two fathers, properly speaking.

FLORENCE. 'Ow could I 'ave two fathers?

ALFRED (*confused*). You have two names, 'aven't yer? Plantagenet and Tooder, both belonging to different 'ouses, the first 'ouse an' the second 'ouse. Now whether your great-great-grandfather was in the first 'ouse or the second 'ouse is wot we want to find out—very well then.

FLORENCE. 'Ere—you're getting a bit mixed, ain't yer?

ALFRED. Well, perhaps I am; anyhow, you are a lady, an' no mistake about it.

FLORENCE. Oh, Alf! I always knew I was somebody, because I never stoop to nobody. When I've seen you sitting at the table, eating a herring, I always felt you were beneath me; even when I was kitchen maid, I wiped the missus acrost the ear because she asked me to say Mum to 'er, and then I told her off, like a queen, an' I do believe if she 'ad answered me back, I'd 'ave left the 'ouse.

ALFRED. That shows the lady in yer.

FLORENCE. Now, I can't waste any more time on yer; I must be up an' doin'. Cut the bread.

ALFRED. Hello, you are putting on a lot of swank, now yer a toff, ain't yer?

FLORENCE. You ought to be proud, Alf Jones, to wait on a lady.

ALFRED. Can't you cut it yourself?

FLORENCE. No, I'm goin' to wash my 'ands to make 'em white. When am I to see my ancestors?

(He grins and grins.)

FLORENCE. Wot are yer grinning at? Can't yer answer a question, my man?

ALFRED (*smothering his laughter*). My man! ain't she biting?

FLORENCE (*dragging his hands down from his mouth*). Wot about my auntsesters?

ALFRED. Well, your aunt's sisters——

FLORENCE. Not aunt's sisters! Auntsesters——

ALFRED. I said auntcestors; you can see them any time you like.

FLORENCE. Where are they?

ALFRED. In the Abbey.

FLORENCE. Wot Abbey?

ALFRED (*with suppressed laughter*). Westminster Abbey, of course.

FLORENCE. Wot are they doing there?

ALFRED. Restin' their bones.

FLORENCE. Wot time can I see them?

ALFRED. From ten till dusk.

FLORENCE. I must doss myself up, an' drop in on them; they'll be wantin' to take me to banquets, an' beanfeasts.

ALFRED. Banquets an' beanfeasts. (*Grinning*.) Don't yer know yer ancestors are dead?

FLORENCE (*dropping a plate*). Dead! Oh, Alf! when did they die?

ALFRED. About a matter of four hundred years ago.

FLORENCE. Four hundred years ago. (*Wiping her eyes*.) An' I never heard anything about it. What did they die of, Alf?

ALFRED. They died of 'aving their 'eads cut off.

FLORENCE. Wot?

ALFRED. Straight, they did. They died on the block. Come over an' 'ave your tea.

(*They sit at table.*)

FLORENCE. Do yer mean my ancestors was murdered?

ALFRED. They 'ad their nappers cut off by order of the king. (*Business cutting bread, illustrating.*) Lor lumme, a bloke was nobody in them days unless 'e 'ad 'is napper cut off?

FLORENCE. Do yer mean, he couldn't hold 'is 'ead up until it was cut off?

ALFRED. Which made it very awkward for them.

FLORENCE. Well, if that ain't upset me and made me turn right queer. (*Emotionally.*) 'Ere—(*violently*)—cut my bread an' butter thin. I ain't a blooming navvy.

ALFRED. No, you're a lady, ain't yer?

FLORENCE. Yes, an' I'm going to h'eat like a lady.

ALFRED. You are going to turn over a new leaf, then?

FLORENCE. I'm going to live up to my ancestors, I give yer my word, an' I'm going to begin to-day. Here, you've 'ad enough tea, just lace up my boots.

ALFRED. Well, that takes it. (*Imitating her.*) "Lace up my boots"; you talk to me as if I was a sort of scullion.

FLORENCE. Wot's that? (*ALF taking off her boots.*)

ALFRED. Why, somebody as isn't fit to sit down at the same table with yer.

FLORENCE. Neither yer are.

ALFRED. 'Ere, 'old 'ard, 'old 'ard, yer ladyship, or yer'll get something you don't like.

FLORENCE (*angrily*). An' who'll do it?

ALFRED. I will, jolly soon——

FLORENCE. You know better than strike yer betters; blood tells, a lady is a lady born—you can't mistake her.

ALFRED. I'm jolly well sure you can't.

FLORENCE. Pass me my slippers, and just give these boots a polish. Now look sharp about it. (*Bullying.*) And don't let me 'ave any saucy looks; remember, I'm a lady.

ALFRED. Lor lumme, I wish I could forget it.

FLORENCE. You'll 'ave to wait on me, 'and an' foot, until I gets a maid.

ALFRED (*polishing boots*). Wot do you want a maid for?

FLORENCE (*admiring herself in glass*). To do my 'air up, an' bath me in the morning.

ALFRED. Why, can't yer clean yerself?

FLORENCE. Now I'm goin' in for improving myself, an' the first thing I do is to improve you. I'm going to send you to a night school.

ALFRED (*dropping boots*). That takes it.

FLORENCE. I want you to learn French, an' Spanish, an' Latin.

ALFRED. Wot for?

FLORENCE. So that you can teach it to me. I sharn't 'ave any time myself, wot with dances, an' balls, an' banquets (*clasping her hands estatically*). Oh, I shall enjoy myself. I shall go into one of the swell restraunts an' ask for fish, an' chips, in seven different languages.

ALFRED. And then you'll wake up, old gal.

FLORENCE (*continuing*). I'll have a dancin' master.

ALFRED. Wot for?

FLORENCE. To teach me a few fancy steps.

ALFRED. He can't teach you more than yer know.

FLORENCE. They dances different in society to wot you does before a barrel organ. I ain't going to dance any more like that—it's vulgar. I want a carriage an' pair, a footman, an' a couple of King Charleys in my lap.

ALFRED. King Charleys in yer lap?

FLORENCE. Little dawgs, yer idiot. I can spend my money as I like, I'm my own boss.

ALFRED. Oh, no, you ain't.

FLORENCE. Yes I am. (*Angrily.*)

ALFRED. I'm jollys well sure you ain't, and you ain't going to 'ave no dancin' master.

FLORENCE. Look here, Alf Jones. I'm my own boss, see, and now I've come into my money, I'm coming out of my shell. Here, 'ave I worn this common old jacket (*taking up jacket*) three winters an' summers, but I ain't goin' to wear it no longer.

ALFRED. Oh, ain't yer?

FLORENCE. No, I ain't, see I wipes my feet on I'm going to 'ave nothing but the very best; and it this old hat too (*taking up a hat*), I'll make a concertina of it. (*Jumps on it.*) That's the end of that.

ALFRED. I suppose now you've come into money yer are going to be a beggar on horseback, an' turn yer back on yer pals.

FLORENCE. No, I ain't. I'm going to spend my money with a free 'and, but I won't forget them as is as poor as I was. Many a time my heart 'as fair ached to think I could not afford to 'elp my poor crippled sister, not even a bob a week, no matter 'ow she wanted it; but now she shall live in comfort for the rest of her life. She 'as shared 'arf my sorrows with me, an' she's going to 'ave a bit of my happiness. I don't believe in people keepin' all their joy to themselves. Pass me that coat an' waistcoat of yours. . . .

ALFRED. Wot for?

FLORENCE. Come on, hurry up.

ALFRED. Wot are yer going to do?

FLORENCE. Never you mind. (*Rolling them up.*) There's poor old Joe Vish, as can't get a job because he ain't got a decent suit. He shall 'ave yours.

ALFRED. Here, 'old 'ard. (*Stopping her.*)

FLORENCE. I ain't mean, an' you shan't be.

Don't let us forget them as is as poor as we was ourselves, now that we are 'appy. Don't be 'ard-hearted, Alf. We are rich, and let us be 'appy and grateful, and share our luck with them as never had any.

ALFRED (*desperately*). You ain't goin' to give Joe Vish my best Sunday togs?

FLORENCE. I am.

ALFRED. No, you ain't.

FLORENCE. Why ain't I? (*Defiantly*).

ALFRED. We can't afford it.

FLORENCE. Wot, not afford to give away an old coat an' vest? You needn't be afraid, I'll buy you another.

ALFRED. No, you *won't*.

FLORENCE. *Why* won't I?

ALFRED. Because you can't.

FLORENCE. Can't!

ALFRED. No, can't.

FLORENCE. Why not?

ALFRED. Because you ain't got no money. (*Said loudly and brutally.*)

FLORENCE. Eh! (*incredulously*). Ain't got no money!

ALFRED. No.

FLORENCE. Don't say that, Alf; you'd kill me if I thought it was true. You're joking, but you can't kid *me*. Wot about the *advertisement*?

ALFRED. That was put in by one of them writin' fellows, who was writin' a book, showing what the big families of the nobility 'ad come down to.

FLORENCE. Do you mean to say—it's all a crool joke, an' I'm nobody after all?

ALFRED. I didn't like to tell you the truth.

FLORENCE (*blankly, in a broken voice*). Then I ain't no Duchess?

ALFRED. No. You're plain Flo Jones.

FLORENCE (*laughing wildly*). Ha! ha! A nice duchess I'd make. The Duchess of Wot? Look at

my carriages an' horses, an' my maids of honour. Wot a beautiful palace. I've got five an' a tanner a week.

ALFRED. I didn't think you'd believe me, old gal, or I wouldn't 'ave done it.

FLORENCE. Don't spare me—I ain't nobody, I ain't got no feeling. (*Walks quietly to coat she has thrown down, and sobbing, she brushes it. Then she picks up hat and hangs it up, wiping her eyes and sobbing. Then she stops sobbing and speaks quietly, trying to be cheerful.*) They say, "Never throw away dirty water, before yer get clean." I shan't be able to help sister after all now. I ain't a lady, only a laughing stock. Oh, it was crool to play such a joke upon me. My 'eart is fair breakin'.

ALFRED (*affected*). Don't take on so, old gal. You shall 'elp your sister; you shall send her a bob a week, an' your little brother threepence. There, there, cheer up, old gal; look at this. (*Shows handful of money.*) I told you I 'ad a bit of luck, but you wouldn't listen to me. I won all this on a horse.

FLORENCE. I don't want it.

ALFRED. Not thirty quid?

FLORENCE. No, I don't want to look at it even. (*Peeping at money.*) Where is it?

ALFRED (*putting money in her lap*). There you are. Ain't they beauties? Now you are smilin' again.

FLORENCE (*tearfully*). No, I ain't.

ALFRED. Yes, you are. Ha! ha! You're laughing. I can see you.

FLORENCE (*smiling sadly through tears*). But I ain't no duchess.

ALFRED. Yes, you are. You're the Duchess of Doherty Court. My old Dutch!

CURTAIN.

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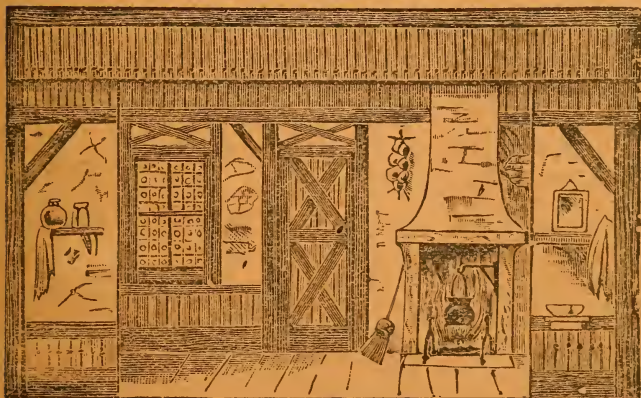
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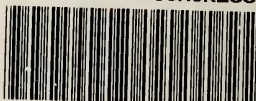
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